

2023 Statewide Graduation

In the end, the American dream is not a sprint, or even a marathon, but a relay. Our families don't always cross the finish line in the span of one generation. But each generation passes on to the next the fruits of their labor. As my family story shows, Latinos have been a blessing for USA for many generations. The future of America depends in part on the success of the Latino community, and this opportunity is just one more signifier of that!

El Programa

Entrance of Graduates and HLCOM

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WELCOME FROM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HLCOM

BIENVENIDA DE LA DIRECTORA EJECUTIVA DE HLCOM

Dr. Isabel Montemayor-Värquer

BIENVENIDA DE PARTE DEL PRESIDENTE DE HLCOM

WELCOME FROM VICE CHAIR OF HLCOM

Consuela F. Barber-Lopez

LEGACY KEYNOTE ADDRESS

DISCURSO DE LA ORADORA PRINCIPAL

Aurora 'Saucedo

Hispanic Latino State of Michigan Commissioner, Flint Legacy Leader

GRADUATE KEYNOTE SPEAKER

DISCURSO DE LA ORADORA PRINCIPAL GRADUADA

Tomas Tello

PRESENTATION OF STOLES & CERTIFICATES

HONORARY TRIBUTE

Dr. Vanessa Reynolds

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CLOSING REMARKS

EXIT OF GRADUATES





Created in 1975, as the Commission on Spanish-Speaking Affairs created by Governor Milliken. HLCOM role as a commission is outlined within Michigan Legislature where fellow ethnic commissions of Michigan are not. The law directs the Commission to:

- 1. Advise the Governor, the Legislature, and the office regarding the coordination and administration of the state programs serving Hispanic/Latino communities.
- 2. Make recommendations to the Governor and the Legislature regarding changes in state programs, statutes, and policies.
- 3. Advise the Governor and the Legislature of the nature, magnitude and the priorities of the problems of the Hispanic/Latino populations.
- 4. Review and approve grants to be made from federal, state, or private funds and which are administered by the Office of the Hispanic/Latino Commission.
- 5. Secure appropriate recognition of Hispanic/Latino accomplishments and contributions to the state.
- 6. Review and approve the annual report prepared by the Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan.



Appreciation We rise as a people when we freely share our gifts for the purpose of community service. The Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan would like to take this opportunity to extend our most humble gratitude to our HLCOM Office Staff, your dedication and service is appreciated. We are also grateful to the Office of Global Michigan for their support. We want to stress our most sincere gratitude to the Community of Volunteers that assured our success today. We are grateful for your support and expertise in helping us in this historic event! Special thanks to our Parents & Guardians for sharing your students dream and bringing them into reality! Together we are celebrating our most valued commodity, our Hispanic/Latino Graduates across this great State of Michigan! Or. Jesse Gernal Chair HLCOM

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE HISPANIC/LATINO COMMISSION

Dr. Isabel Montemayor-Varquez

Dear Graduates:

Felicidades/Congratulations graduates, what you have accomplished is no easy feat. For many of you, you are the first in your families to graduate from a post-secondary program. In many cases you have simultaneously carried the dual responsibility of being both student and fully dedicated family member. Whether it was figuring out how to apply to FAFSA on your own, what technical career path you wanted to follow, or defending your dissertation, all while balancing other responsibilities, you were successful in a daunting space. Being the only Latinx student in your classroom, the first Latinx student to earn a degree in your program, or being away from your family for the first time can be stressful and yet you found the ganas de seguir adelante.

The Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan knows and understands many of the struggles you have faced because many of us faced similar adversity. It is because we are aware of the statistics, we understand the structural inequities, and the systemic racism that plagues institutions of higher learning, that we commend you on this great achievement. Regardless of the challenges, regardless of the setbacks, regardless of those who told you it was impossible, you persevered and continued to reach for the stars. We only hope that this is the first step in your journey to greatness.

Whether it's as a politician, professor, police officer, or plumber, the knowledge you gained both inside and outside of the classroom is essential in making an impact across the state.

The purpose of this graduation is to bring graduates together from across the state to network, realize you were never alone, and to celebrate in solidarity. As post-secondary graduates you have set the bar and expectation higher for the next generation of scholars, and for that contribution alone we thank you. In the Nahua-Mexica tradition young men would be sent into the wilderness on their own to prove that they were men and bring back a bounty for their family. The entire community would come to celebrate and honor the achievements of that young man and the he had gained during his journey into the unknown. Today we gather to celebrate the courage you have gained throughout your journey.

We look froward to hearing where the path continues to lead you. We hope you will stay in touch and consider staying in the great state of Michigan. We hope to see you apply the skills and knowledge you possess to make our state an even greater place to live for your nietos y bisnietos.

Sincerely,

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Dra. Isabel Montemayor-Vazquez Executive Director of the Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan



FROM THE VICE CHAIR OF THE HISPANIC/LATINO COMMISSION

Consuela Barber Löpez

I have been made humbled and honored to be standing before such academic excellence and cultural brilliance! It is true, WE ARE OUR ANCESTORS DREAM, a dream made a reality through self-determination as well as that tenacious spirit of resilience given naturally to us by our parents, grandparents,

our community, our people, our ancestors!

. The symbol you see is called Sankofa it is an Adinkra symbol that means to "Go Back & Get" in short it means to move forward you must remember the past. As you move forward in your

life's trajectory do not forget to be BRILLANT IN ALL OF YOUR

AUTHENTICITY!

Be your OWN INSPIRATION! Do not go along to get along. Do not waste your time following arbitrary archaic rules that prevent your brilliance to shine in full! Remember who you are as you discover new pathways for our people's success! Create the new, the now, and the next inspiration with humility with all of your brilliance and become the Legacy Leader that you are!

Consuela Francesca Barber-Lopez

2023 Vice Chair of the Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan



2023 HISPANIC/LATINO STATEWIDE COLLEGE GRADUATION KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Aurora Saucedo

It is with great pride that the Commission celebrates you today. This is a once in a lifetime event that you will remember as you reach other goals, such as a new job, marriage, kids, etc. Remember to always set high expectations for yourselves. Stay positive and do not dwell on your failures. Set your goals and work hard to reach them. Ask for help from others and do not forget to thank your higher power. Go forth and do great things for your community. The future depends on you. El futuro depende de ustedes. Congratulations to all of you! ¡ Felicidades a todos!

of an undocumented mother who worked the fields of Arkansas, Indiana, Ohio, and Illinois. She lived across the border in Nuevo Progresso, Mexico with her grandfather for the first 6 years of her life and then was adopted by her uncle in 1959, who brought her to Flint, MI, where she has resided for most of her life. She is and has been heavily involved in the community for over 50 years. She is Community Coordinator for Latinos United for Flint, a member of Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church, committee member of Community Foundation of Greater Flint Equity Task force, and Michigan State University Flint Center for Health Equity Solutions Consortium. She has a

Aurora was born in San Sebastian, Texas. She is the daughter

In 2022, Aurora was sworn in as a commissioner of Hispanic/Latino Commission of Michigan. She volunteers as a translator/interpreter for the Spanish-speaking community and advocates for them.

Baccalaureate in Secondary Education, with a major in Social Studies and a minor in English.



2023 HISPANIC/LATINO STATEWIDE GRADUATION GRADUATE KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Tomàs Tello

I am a senior at Genesee Early College, a dual enrollment program with the University of Michigan-Flint. I decided to pursue my education at this school to not only gain 53 credits of free college however the rigorous environment I was surrounded in created my ambitious and studious habits that I continue to develop. Though my school didn't offer sports or a traditional high school experience I still tried to be optimistic and create opportunities for students to make memories by joining student government and eventually becoming president.

I plan to pursue my education and obtain a Bachelor of Business Administration with a concentration in international business with minors in cybersecurity and Spanish. Once I achieve my Bachelor of International Business, I plan to pursue law school. My end goal is to become a civil litigation attorney and eventually become an immigration lawyer in hopes of opening a nonprofit law firm in my home city of Flint to help immigrants and other impoverished people.

My passions are authenticity, resilience, and service and I have over four years of experience working with health and grassroots service organizations in the Flint community. My collaborations include the Latinx Leadership Academy, the Flint Public Health Youth Academy, the Genesee

County Prevention Coalition, and more.
Recently I have been nominated for the Voices for Children's Champion
Award. In my free time I like to exercise, participate in sports and athletics
and practice music. A fun fact is I have performed a poem for Jaden
Smith.

I dedicate time after school as serving as Student Government
President by helping facilitate life skills classes, dances, cultural events
such as my schools first Hispanic Heritage Month assembly and more! I
also had the privilege to serve as Secretary of the National Honor
Society and as the Service Executive of UM-Flint's Latino Student Union
LUNA (Latinos United for advancement). Furthermore, I bridged the early
college high school students with UM-Flint by creating a Latino student
Union for the high schoolers called LUNA Jr. which is affiliated with LUNA



2023 HISPANIC/LATINO STATEWIDE GRADUATION HONARY TRIBUTE

Dr. Vanessa Reynolds

Vanessa Reynolds is a higher education advocate, community leader, and first-generation college graduate. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in Business Administration, a Master of Education in Educational Leadership, and most recently, a Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from Wayne State University (WSU). Her dedication to higher education and passion for student success is reflected in her 19 years of experience as an Admissions Counselor at WSU's Office of Undergraduate Admissions. Providing educational opportunities to students and contributing to their advancement has been one of her highest objectives. As the past chair of WSU's Latinx Faculty and Staff Association and various other initiatives across campus, Vanessa has demonstrated her influence to enhance diversity and inclusion across the university. efforts have expanded beyond WSU, currently serving as co-chair of the for Advocates for Latino Student Advancement in Michigan Education, a nonorganization committed to making college education a reality for Latino students

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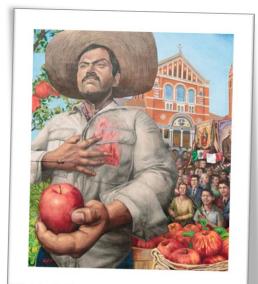
Air of the board profit for Latino students across the state, Admission Counseling Conference Planning Committee. Her

and as a member of the Michigan Association for College Admission Counseling Conference Planning Committee. Her commitment to this career is empowered by the encouragement she gives to hundreds of students to pursue higher education and the mission of her alma mater to prepare a diverse student body to thrive.





My name is Jorge Luis Lopez, a first-generation college graduate born and raised in Southwest Detroit. I obtained a B.S. in Industrial Engineering in 2018 from Wayne State University. I took some time off after graduation to focus on my professional career at DTE Energy where I serve on the committee for the Latino employee resource group called" Somos" and use the platform to advocate for the underrepresented. I returned to Wayne State University and will be completing my master's degree in industrial engineering this Winter 2023. I am grateful for all the support I have received during my academic journey and will be paying it forward by



mentoring the next generation of Latino/a scholars.



Amanda Isabel Osuna is originally from Venezuela and migrated to sunny South Florida in 2003. She received her bachelor's degree in legal studies from the University of Central Florida in 2015 and her Master's Degree in Criminology from Florida Atlantic University in 2018. She will be graduating with a Ph.D. in Criminology from Michigan State University in the Summer of 2023. She has certificates in DEI, Law & Society, Policing, and Crime and Criminal Behavior. Her research focuses on sexual violence, vulnerability, betrayal, and the intersectionality of marginalized identities. Her most recent work has been featured in Crime & Delinguency, Journal of Social Issues, and Studies in Conflict & Terrorism.



Hi, my name is **Shayle Campos**. I am from Battle Creek, Michigan. I am graduating from Albion College in the Spring of 2023 with a major in Kinesiology and a minor in English. I plan to continue studying and pursue an OTD.

"Hola! My name is **Kiara Church**, I am graduating from Central Michigan University with a Bachelor of Music in Music Composition and a minor in Childhood Development. After graduation, I plan to continue working as a Lead Teacher at a Mt. Pleasant daycare center until August 2024 and then attend graduate school for Music Therapy. I have been so blessed to be involved with and supported by several organizations and had the opportunities to lead in many of them: I crossed into the most Gorgeous, Prestigious, and Original Latinx-Oriented Sorority, Gamma Phi Omega International Sorority Incorporated, in April of 2021 where I have since served as Vice President, Sisterhood Chair, Community Service Chair, and SGA Representative throughout the years; I was also President of CMU's Multicultural Greek Council. I was also involved with the Empowered Latino Union, the Tutoring Center, and interned remotely for the Institute for Composer Diversity. I had



many incredible mentors throughout college, the most prominent of all

being Dr. José-Luis Maúrtua who passed away in 2022. A memorial scholarship has been set up in his memory to support incoming students to the music program, a link is located here if you would like to support: https://ignite.cmich.edu/project/32440. Much of my success throughout college is owed to him, and I hope that he is proud and smiling down on me now.

¡Muchísimas gracias por todo maestro, lo hicimos!"





Saray Garcia-Murillo I am graduating in August 2023 from Grand Valley State University with a major in Legal Studies and a minor in Criminal Justice. After graduation, I plan to work at a law firm or legal department of a company for a year or two and eventually apply to law school. I am interested in immigration law, real estate law, business law, corporate law, and criminal defense law.

Lorena Pilar Ayala DACA recipient, and first-generation college graduate.

Hello, my name is **Odalis Garcia**. I am from Los Angeles California, and I am a first gen student who wants to be a part of change.

Nancy Muñoz is the daughter of Manuel and Araceli Muñoz. She was born and raised in Holland, Michigan where she was involved in marching band, symphony orchestra, student government, National Honor Society, and Latin Americans United for Progress. After graduating from Holland High School in 2019, she started her high education journey in Fall of 2019 majoring in Interior Design at Western Michigan University. During her time at Western, she

became a member of the Interior Design Student Organization and the

Latino Student Alliance where she served on the executive board for two years as Marketing Chair and Social Chair, respectively. During her time with the Latino Student Alliance, she helped plan many events such as El Grito, the Latinx Student Art Showcase, (where she also showcased her own artwork), FAFSA Night, and a collaboration with Kalamazoo College's Latinx Student Organization. Additionally, Nancy worked with Residence Life as a Resident Assistant for one and a half years and was promoted to Resident Manager for one year. After graduation, Nancy plans to earn her NCIDQ Interior Design Certification. She hopes to design spaces in higher education to better the lives of students and underrepresented communities.



"Hi, I'm Adriana Sierra Ramirez, an international student from Colombia. My most significant achievements have been being a first-generation college student, a first-generation master's student in my second language in another country with a scholarship and developing a project with the Latinx community and a thesis about a rare disease empowering an underrepresented population.

I genuinely believe that community work is the key to life and valuing everyone's perspective and perceptions is crucial. My specialty as a public health professional is the health promotion path to work for the well-being of individuals and the community."

My name is **Jose Garza**, I was born and raised in Mexico. My majors are Economics and Management with an Emphasis in International Business with International Studies. I am also getting a minor in French. During my college career, I spent several semesters as leader of the organization for the Latinx community on campus to increase diversity.

Abel Jaime Wayne State University Master of Science & Engineering





Antonio Plascencia-Vargas GVSU Master of Science with an Applied Mathematics Major

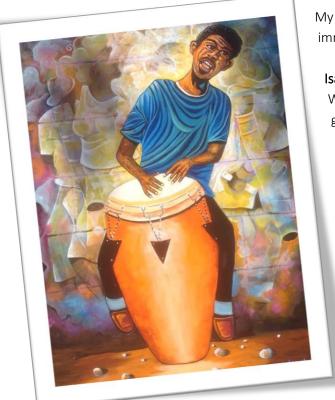
Emilee Vela GVSU, Bachelor of Science, Applied Engineering Sciences





My name is **Leslie Tovar.** I am a first generation from Dallas, TX majoring in Psychology.





My name is **Morgan Frazier**, and I am the first person in my immediate family to graduate with two degrees.

Isabel Lopez BS Engineering (Paper and Chemical), 2023, Western Michigan University. A native of Michigan, Isabel graduated from Western Michigan University.

Litzy Sanchez First Generation Student from Chicago, IL. **Jason Uriel Huerta**, Albion College, bachelor's degree in communications study & Psychology Minor

Jocelyn Medina, GVSU Bachelor of Art, Economics & Management

Melissa Zalewa, WMU, Master in TESOL (Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages)





My name is Jessica Cortes, and I am from the small town of Hartford, MI. I started my K-12 education learning English as a second language and being a low performance student in elementary. In 2018, I graduated in Top-10 from Hartford High School. I also graduated reading at a 5th grade level according to a standardized test. Even when these standardized tests stated that I was not academically prepared or that I wouldn't succeed in a 4-Year Institution. I never let a score, a test, or anyone define my academic abilities.

In April 2022, I graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work from

Western Michigan University with Magna Cum Laude Honors. In June 2022, I enrolled at WMU in the MSW Advanced Standing (10-Month) Social Work Program.

In March 2023, I was selected as Western Michigan University's 2023 Master of Social Work (MSW) Student of the Year. On April 29th, I will be graduating with a Master of Social Work: Policy, Planning, and Administration from Western Michigan University.

Luis E Diaz came from Chicago Illinois and studied at Albion College for the past 4 years. Graduated from ITW David Speer academy high school and is son of Sandra and Pedro Diaz.

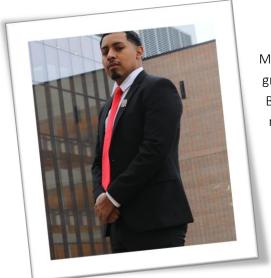
Jesus Rodriguez Salas Double major in Biology and Anthropology

Kimberly Guerra Take pride in how far you've come and have faith in how far you will go.



Samantha Torres, GVSU Higher Education & Student Affairs





My name is **Rodrigo Lopez-Ruiz.** I am a first-generation college graduate. I am graduated from Michigan State University with a Bachelors in Advertising Management. I am excited to start my new chapter and journey in life.

Hi! My name is **Cesar Adrian Ramirez-Mier,** and I am from Dallas, Texas. I have been at Albion College for the past 3 years getting a degree in Communication Studies and a minor in Education Studies with a concentration in business. I am a first-generation Latino, and I am excited to be graduating early! This will be my first formal graduation because during the pandemic I had to graduate online. I will always cherish the opportunities that Albion College has provided me to get me ready for the workforce.





Cristian Morales I'm from Chicago and soon to be graduate from Albion College with a bachelor's in psychology. I look to continue to study in the future to become a counselor in the high school setting, with my focus on helping students. I also look forward to teaching boxing to the youth as a form of self-defense.

"Originally from Dallas, Texas, Carlos

Paniagua Emiliano found a second home at Albion College. He pursued a Bachelor of Arts degree in Integrated Marketing Communication, where he gained a deep understanding of the intersection between business, marketing, and public policy.

During his time at Albion, Carlos was a recipient of the Project P-250
Scholarship, recognizing campus leadership/involvement, and the Michigan Hispanic/Latino
Commission's Future Leaders
Scholarship. He's also been actively involved in many student organizations, such as Union Board

and Tau Kappa Epsilon fraternity. Carlos is

determined to continue his Midwest journey after graduation, as he has developed a deep appreciation for the region and the state of Michigan."

Ricardo Paz. I will be pursuing a career in the tech industry. I hope to help others pursue degrees and careers in the STEM industry as it is not often you see people of color in these positions.





Dayana Rodriguez-Gutierrez will be graduating with her Master of Science in speech-language pathology from Grand Valley State University in December of this year. She has a Bachelor of Arts in public relations and strategic communications from Oakland University. Upon graduation, Dayana will work as a clinical fellow to earn her title as a speech-language pathologist and plans to do so in a pediatric setting.

My name is **Jose Garza**, I was born and raised in Monterrey, Nuevo León. Now I lived in Dallas, Texas. I am graduating from Albion College in Economics and Management with an emphasis in international business and International Studies with a minor in French. During my stance in college, I was a leader of the Organization for Latinx Awareness (OLA) on campus, focusing on bringing diversity. In addition, I was involved in the Delta Sigma Phi business fraternity,

International Student Union, Investment club and more.

With my degree I hoped I could be an entrepreneur, inspired by my

grandfather. I am proud to say that I will be the first of my family to graduate in United States and to be a model to my younger sisters. I also want to say thank you to my family, friends, and professors for all the support through this journey. ¡Hay que siempre mirar hacia adelante!





Estefany Valentín First generation college graduate from Chicago!

""Si me va bien, le va mejor a mi familia."

Donny Hernandez Fulfilling a career in the automotive industry. Specifically want to work in production and manufacturing for the new components that'll be implemented into new vehicles. Down the line I want to work for Honda or Volvo.

Kevin Gomez, an exercise science graduate from Medellin-Colombia, passionate volleyball player, the sport that brought him to the United States, with vocation about helping others in his personal and professional life.

Love spending time with his family, girlfriend, and friends, going to new places and trying new food, also an outdoor adventure is always in the radar.



My name is **Jacqueline Espinosa**, and I am from Dallas, Texas. I can proudly say as the oldest child, a first-generation Latina college student, that I will be graduating from Albion College with a Bachelor's in Kinesiology with a minor in Psychology. Throughout my time at Albion, I joined various clubs such as the Albion College Dance Team (ACDT), and Student Volunteer Bureau (SVB). In ACDT, I became a co-captain for 2 years straight. College was a life-changing experience especially for being so far away from home. I appreciate everything that has occurred and will continue to strive to do big things!





Taelor Mae Quntanilla I'm graduating from Flushing high school. I am an honor roll student with 3.8 GPA and will be attending Saginaw Valley State University with a major in nursing.

Laila Ortega Velasco I am a first-generation college student from Houston Texas. I will be obtaining my Bachelor of Arts in Anthropology and Sociology with a minor in Philosophy from Albion College. I am a part of the Prentiss M. Brown Honors Program at Albion College. I am an Emerge Scholar, President of the Albion College Art Club, an Albion College Fellow, and a dean list student. I am also a proud member of Hermandad de Sigma Iota Alpha Inc, where I server as Academic Chairwoman, Fundraising Chairwoman,

Community Service Chairwoman, DIE Chair, and Recruitment

Chairwoman.

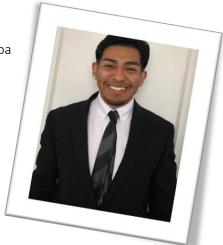


Alia Olan Focus on art and incorporate art therapy with children, plan to have my own practice with a studio.

My name is **Brian Lomeli Garcia**, I am a DACA recipient who is attending Albion College and will be the first in my family to graduate from college. I was privileged enough to be able to graduate from a four year university where I was able to strengthen and expand my knowledge. My goal in the future is to be a CRNA (Certified Registered Nurse Anesthetists) where I am able to work with a medical team and be able to not only help patients but also expand my knowledge within the medical system. I am thankful for the different teachers and mentors that helped me on my journey but especially very grateful to my biggest supporters, my parents. Being a DACA student being able to be where I am at is only a dream made possible and a blessing to be able to come this far. I am excited for what the future holds for me,

and grateful for everything.

Jason Uriel Huerta Throughout my time at Albion, I have participated in and joined various organizations such as Tau Kappa Epsilon Fraternity (TKE), Organization of Latinx Awareness (OLA), and the TriO program. I was also involved in a few leadership positions such as MQB And vice president of OLA.



HISPANIC LATINO COMMISSION

2023 MEETINGS

April 14, 2023 Latinx Technology & Community Center Flint, MI 48506

> August 11 & 12, 2023 GVSU Detroit Center 163 Madison St Detroit, MI 48226

September 8, 2023 Adrian City Hall Offices 135 E Maumee St Adrian, MI 49221

October 27, 2023

Detroit Union Carpenters and Millwrights

Skilled Training Center

11687 American Ave.

Detroit, MI 48204







HLCOM strives to market the state's career development services to Michigan Hispanics, encourage initiatives to reduce the high school dropout rates of Hispanic youth, and facilitate efforts to increase the enrollment of Hispanics in postsecondary education and training programs.

We Want to Hear from You!! Contact Us

Highlights Nomination Share Your Story with Us
Speaker Request
Sponsorship Request
HHM Scholarship Application

FUTURE PARTNERSHIPS & CAREER SPONSOR OPPORTUNITIES: 1-517-230-7906

MAILING ADDRESS:

LABOR & ECONONICS OFFICE Hispanic Latino Commission of Michigan 105 W. Allegan Street, 2nd floor Lansing, MI 48933

For media inquiries, please contact the Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity - Ebony Stith at 517-285-4549 or StithE@michigan.gov.

Department of Labor and Economic Opportunity

(LEO) provides the connections, expertise, and innovative solutions to drive continued business growth, build vibrant communities, create affordable housing, generate tourism and attract and retain key talent to fill Michigan's vast pipeline of opportunities.



